

LWF Studies

REPORTS AND TEXTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF STUDIES

OPEN OUR EYES

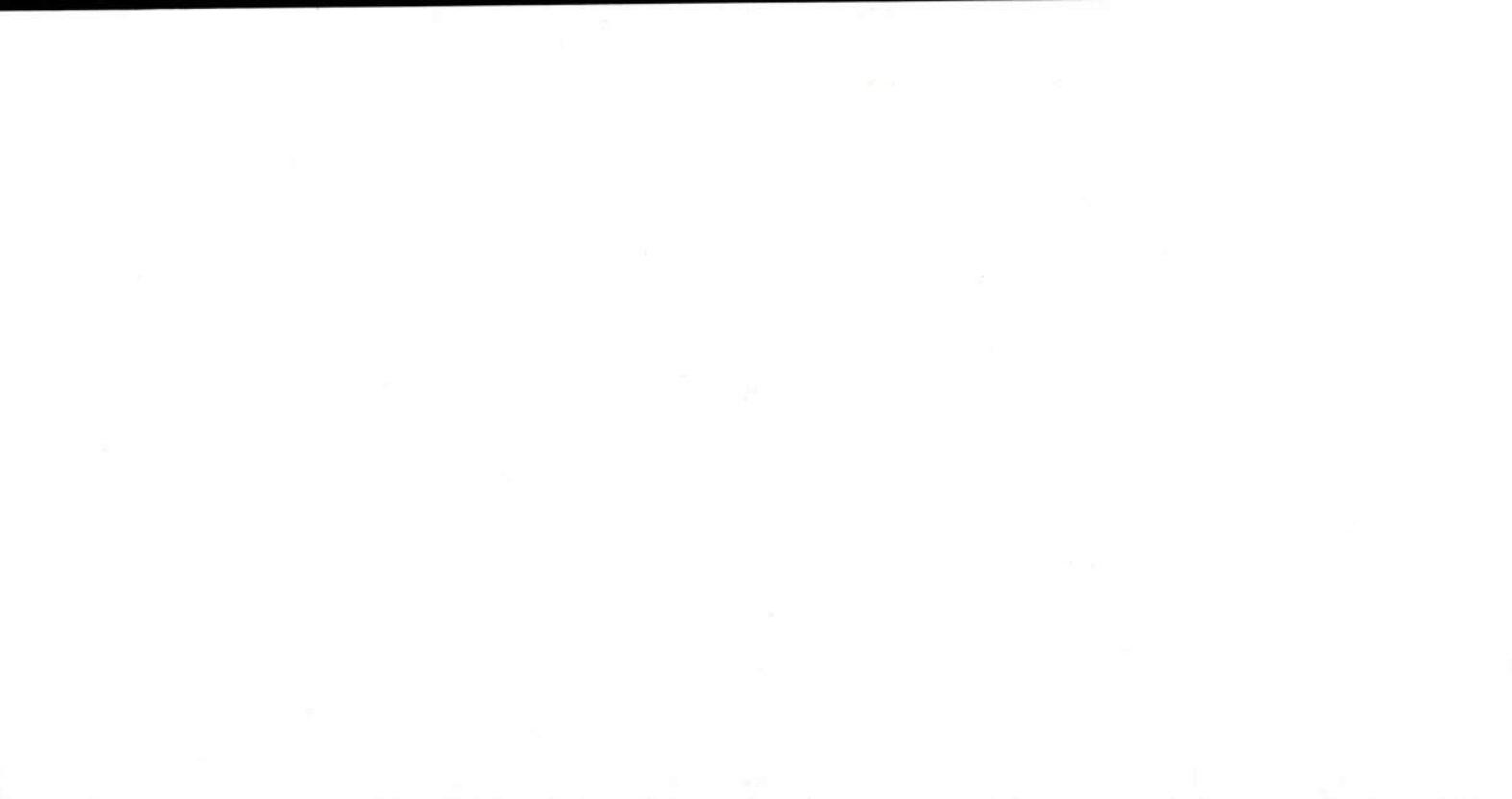
INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATION FOR WOMEN ICW



International Consultation for Women, Mexico City, August 28-September 7, 1989.

This served in part as a pre-Assembly gathering. An abbreviated report (containing the reports of the six issue groups) was published in the LWF Studies series in 1989 under the titles *Open Our Eyes / Öffne Unsere Augen / Abre los Ojos*. Some of the presentations were published in *The Power we Celebrate – Women's Stories of Faith and Power*, LWF/WCC 1992 (a contribution to the WCC Ecumenical Decade in Solidarity with Women).

N.B. The full report foreshadowed in the Preface of *Open Our Eyes* did not come to fruition.



**INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATION
FOR WOMEN ICW**

OPEN OUR EYES

**An Abbreviated Report from the
International Consultation for
Women
LWF Pre-Assembly**

Mexico City, August 28th — September 7th, 1989

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PREFACE

The International Consultation for Women (*ICW*) which took place in Mexico City August 29 — September 7, 1989 was in part a women's Pre-assembly gathering in preparation for the Eighth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation to be held January 30 — February 8, 1990 in Curitiba, Brazil.

Participants were chosen from three categories; delegates to the Assembly, leaders of women in member churches and ecumenical delegates from churches and organizations with a special assignment to matters related to women.

The deliberations of the consultations were done in plenary sessions for worship, Bible studies and introduction to issue topics. Detailed work on issues was carried out in groups who reported back to the plenary and amendments were made by all participants. The language used is the reflection of the group as each individual report is faithful to the source of the life stories which provide the framework for this document.

The contents of this document reflect the reality of life experienced by women in many different situations, especially in areas where the Lutheran church is called to be a witness of the one God who hears the cry of the people. This is a document about the cries of women. Many are unheard and unheeded cries. As women shared their stories in Mexico, we began to hear our common suffering, and our common longing for justice — for ourselves, for society and for the whole endangered creation.

My task as Lutheran World Federation staff member responsible for the Program on Women in the Church and Society is to pass on this document to the member churches and delegates to the Eighth Assembly for further study and possible follow-up. It does not express an official position of the LWF. This summary is the work of the participants to the International Consultation for Women.

A full report of the entire consultation can be obtained from the Department of Studies at the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva.

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INTRODUCTION

Eighty women representing forty-four member churches of the Lutheran World Federation and ecumenical guests, from 51 countries, gathered under the theme: *OPEN OUR EYES — to A New Vision, to A New Community, to New Possibilities* at the LWF International Consultation for Women, in Mexico City, from August 29 — September 7, 1989. The consultation was arranged by the *LWF Office for Women in Church and Society*.

Through worship life which was vital, we experienced oneness in Jesus Christ. Bible study each day centered around various aspects of the theme. Through the study of God's word, through content presentations and through the sharing of experiences, we examined our responsibilities for witness and service in God's world. As women living in different countries, cultures and church traditions, we were challenged to analyze, discuss and act on issues confronting the world today. We were continually faced with the question: What can and should we do as Christian women?

The following reports summarize the six issues discussed: *Poverty, Debt Crisis, Militarism, Violence, Integrity of Creation and Church Structures*. The recommendations are the result of our consultation.

REPORT OF THE ISSUE GROUP ON POVERTY

The problem of poverty arises from an international economic-political system based on asymmetries. In this system there is one group which controls power and leadership and creates dependency in others. This domination and subordination is precisely what makes asymmetry possible.

In the last 500 years since the European colonization of the "Other Worlds", Western patriarchal culture dominates and dictates the norm, not only in matters of culture, but also in lifestyles and the economies of the world. Thus, those who suffer most from poverty are those who differ from these norms, for example, the women, the children, the Blacks, people of mixed races, the disabled, the immigrants, the ethnic minorities, to name only some. Those who control power only pay heed to the needs of the poor with their own vested interests at heart.

POVERTY is prevalent worldwide. Three billion of the world's population lack access to the means for a life with dignity. Many countries cannot provide the basic needs for their people, needs such as food, safe drinking water, housing, health care, education and other basic facilities.

POVERTY is on the rise, in all countries. Contrasts are seen in rural areas and cities and affect people of all socio-economic classes. In many cities affluence and extreme poverty appear, side by side. There are countries abounding in natural resources and yet the basic needs for the majority of the people go unmet.

POVERTY has many root causes which include social, economic and political systems, natural calamities and the debt crisis.

Despite the fact that gains have been made in some areas, *POVERTY* is feminized and discrimination against women still persists in the home and in the work force. In many countries the countless hours of homemaking are neither recognized nor re-

munerated. In two-thirds of the world boys go to school and girls stay home to work. Women at work do not enjoy the benefits and opportunities they ought to. In rural areas, the situation is even worse, causing many people to move to the cities. Women bear the brunt of poverty in the slums.

Due to various reasons, the number of women who are the sole support of their family is increasing. One-third of the world's families are headed by women and many have to bear the burden of poverty alone.

SUMMARY

POVERTY, a worldwide crisis, is increasing. Throughout the world, the basic needs of billions of people are not met. Both underdeveloped and developed countries, cities and rural areas are affected. Women and children are among the first victims. Some progress has been made, yet much remains to be done in order to fight this calamity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The LWF International Consultation for Women recommends:

- *That women's organizations and congregations of the LWF member churches form networks in favor of the dignity of the people in their fight against poverty in their different countries.*
- *That the LWF member churches and particularly church leaders give their active support to these efforts.*
- *That the LWF Office of WICAS give its support to this initiative by facilitating the exchange of information among local groups and develop, publicize and make available resource materials related to economics and poverty reflecting especially the perspective of women, whenever the need arises.*
- *That LWF member churches and women's organizations promote and support family planning efforts and responsible parenthood.*

REPORT OF THE ISSUE GROUP ON THE DEBT CRISIS

An area of primary concern in the LWF, for both women and men, is economic justice, and how attention is focused on a major symptom of this broad concern, namely the *DEBT CRISIS*. The *DEBT CRISIS* has spelled hunger and death to hundreds of millions of people in the Third World. Through stagnation of the industrial market economies in the 80s, the adoption of stringent monetarist policies by industrialized nations, and sharp increases in interest rates, the economic crisis has spread from the affluent to the poorer countries thus aggravating the *DEBT CRISIS*.

The *impact* on the poorer countries has been:

- Extremely severe and protracted decline in the Gross Domestic Product growth rate per capita;
- decline in export earnings due to excessive dependence on trading of only one or just a few commodities, the prices of which fell dramatically;
- rise in unemployment rates;
- growth of underemployment;
- fall in purchasing power of salaries;
- increase in the exploitation of women and children;
- acceleration of inflation;
- decline in government expenditure in the social sector and on food supplies.

The *DEBT CRISIS* has also had an *impact* on the people and economies of the industrialized nations. Some examples are as follows:

- Increased inflation rate, (e.g. 3% in the Federal Republic of Germany);
- banks closed branches in some poor neighborhoods (e.g. USA)
- massive lay-offs and long-term unemployment in certain sectors.

The Group explored several *myths* about the debt crisis, namely:

- The Third World owes 1.3 trillion dollars.
- The *DEBT CRISIS* is simply a matter of "ability to pay" which is a function purely of the economic (mis)management of the individual countries. Delinquent debtor governments have overly dramatized and politicized the debt crisis.
- There would be no *DEBT CRISIS* if it were not for the oil price increases of the 1970s.
- The *DEBT CRISIS* is not important for the average American or West European.
- The Third World alone is to be blamed. Bankers in the industrialized countries are only trying to help, why should they be blamed?
- There is a simple solution to the debt crisis: structural adjustment, whereby Third World revenues are increased and expenditures reduced so that domestic resources are released for loan repayment.

Some of the stories heard about the effect of the *debt crisis* on the everyday lives of people in different parts of the world include:

From India Fishermen obtain loans to buy fishing boats and then rent them to others for daily fishing. The prawns and fish caught are exported, especially the bigger and better quality ones. The fishermen are left with the smaller fish which fetch a lower price that is insufficient to feed their families.

Children also help to increase family income and therefore stop going to school. Many suffer from malnutrition.

Garment workers, especially women and children are paid less than men. The clothes are exported and this results in large profits for the factory owners and misery for the employees.

In rice farming regions, frogs that once eat the insects in the rice paddy are now being exported as food (frogs' legs). The result is the need to use insecticides and pesticides, which are costly and have a harmful effect on food.

From Liberia Ordinary people were required to pay towards the nation's debts, and up to 50% of salaries were automatically deducted; children went without lunch so that their parents could pay these taxes. In 1985, citizens were urged by the government to buy bonds to raise money to help pay off the debt; however, on maturity in 1988, the government had no money to pay off the bonds to those citizens.

From Ecuador Taxes rose by 50% in a year to pay for social, education and health programs. 400 million dollars were deposited in National Citibank. In one day the country went broke because Citibank used the money as reimbursement for a previous national debt.

From Brazil In rural areas cash crops are planted where there was once subsistence farming. People became very indebted because of purchases of big machinery needed for cash crops. Many were forced to sell their land cheaply to large landowners and were faced with the choice of either going North to the tense situation in the Amazon or going to the big cities and joining the misery belt.

SUMMARY

In nations whose governments are in debt to the industrialized countries, people, particularly women and children, are fighting for life. Increasing deprivation is being imposed on the poor. However, there is in the Gospel a vision of justice, compassion and peace where human dignity is fundamental, the rights of all

persons are respected, and the basic needs of all are met. The churches and individual Christians have a responsibility not only to protest worsening economic conditions, but also to commit themselves through study and action to find solutions to poverty and the debt crisis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The LWF International Consultation for Women recommends:

- *That the LWF member churches and women's organizations commit themselves during the next five years to study the effects of poverty and the DEBT CRISIS and its effects on women and families as a symptom of global economics. This study should include training programs and activities for:*
- *Developing economic literacy, for example understanding how the economy works and its relationship to our daily lives; the connection between economic power and political power; and the perspective that the economy is neither neutral nor beyond our control.*
- *involving women in ecumenical discussions/conferences on poverty and the debt crisis.*
- *That WICAS give priority attention to poverty and the international debt crisis and the impact on women and families by*
- *Designating a portion of the fund of PROGRAM FOR THE PROMOTION OF WOMEN IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY for economic literacy training programs in local areas, which are designed to be self-sustaining and by identifying women as trainers for these programs;*
- *enabling the participation of women in LWF member churches in both debtor and creditor nations in the Women's Alternative Economic Summit to be held in 1990 in New York.*

- *That the LWF Community Development Service respond to the increasingly devastating effects of poverty and the DEBT CRISIS on women by giving increased attention to women's concerns in the implementation of projects and also by enabling a clearer understanding of project guidelines.*

REPORT OF THE ISSUE GROUP ON MILITARISM

The issue of *MILITARISM* was illustrated by witnesses who had direct and painful experiences in which force was used to dominate populations, to guarantee access to resources and to keep power concentrated in a few hands. These included a refugee from El Salvador; a former refugee from Uganda; a Tanzanian woman whose country suffered economically as a result of military conflict in 1978-1979 with a neighboring country; a woman whose family was a victim of Japanese militarism during the second world war; a Palestinian woman living under Israeli occupation; a Chilean woman living under prolonged military rule as well as women from the United States who recognize their country's responsibility for fueling the arms race and intervening militarily around the world and who work for universal peace and justice.

One participant who had recently come from the Pacific area told of *MILITARISM* there: The deployment of cruise missiles many of which were dismantled under the terms of the *INF (International Nuclear Forces) Treaty* on Pacific Fleet submarines; dangerous and provocative military maneuvers in the North Pacific held jointly by the United States, Japan, the Philippines and South Korea; prostitution around U.S. military bases in the Philippines and repression by the Philippine military of people's movements for national sovereignty and control over their own resources; U.S. military bases and French uranium mining on aboriginal land in Australia; and French nuclear testing in Polynesia.

It was noted that present-day *MILITARISM* has some of its roots in colonialism. Although most of the world has gone through the de-colonisation process, the former colonial powers have had a lasting impact on economic, political and social relations in the countries they previously dominated, and new colo-

nial forms have been substituted for direct domination within these same countries. These new powers continue to maintain ownership and control over the land, labor, capital, technology and raw materials in two-thirds of the world. This is done with the complicity of local elites or oligarchies, who are given arms and military training and in turn repress their own people's struggle for independence and self-determination. Through the age-old device of divide and rule, conflicts are stirred up within countries, and war, chaos, instability and the possibility of continued control are perpetuated.

A distinction was made between *MILITARISM* and People's Movements to defend themselves against domination and intervention, whether foreign or domestic. Various forms of militarism were considered: direct military intervention, destabilisation through the use of proxy armies; foreign sponsorship of coups d'etat; foreign occupation; military rule and economic intervention with the intention to undermine a particular government.

Our eyes were opened to the effects of *MILITARISM* by the chilling example of life and death in El Salvador, as described by the eye-witness. There the U.S. supports a local oligarchy who acquiesce to continued U.S. domination of the country's economic and political life. The US supplies 1.5 million dollars per day in military materials which will have to be paid back by the Salvadorean people. The army and paramilitary groups use violence to suppress dissent and terrorize the population. Young men are recruited by force and are compelled to carry out acts of torture and assassination of people they know. Soldiers carry out bombings which result in widespread loss of life and severe environmental destruction. They abduct, torture and kill people suspected of being "subversive". They rape and mutilate women. They create an atmosphere of fear in the attempt to quell the insurgency which was born of poverty, landlessness, and the hope for a better life under genuine democratic rule.

In other Latin American countries, the "*National Security Doctrine*" has resulted in coups d'etat even in cases where democratic elections had determined the head of state. If the U.S.

considers that a democratically elected government is too leftist (such as in Guatemala, Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Chile), it attempts to continue to dominate the country through military intervention. The result may be a military coup after destabilisation by an economic embargo or other indirect means of intervention, and the maintenance of a military dictatorship or a civilian dictatorship supported by the military. With the exception of Cuba, Nicaragua and Mexico, Latin American armies are trained directly or indirectly by the U.S.

We acknowledged the fact that neither South African nor Namibian women could attend the consultation because they are holders of South African passports. The brutality of racism and the savagery of the South African government's repression of its own people, its illegal occupation of Namibia and its repeated attacks on the frontline states were noted.

The effects of *MILITARISM* and the continuation of the arms race were discussed, with special focus on the effects on women. While 1 trillion US dollars per year are spent worldwide on the means of mass destruction, women are being deprived of the resources necessary for their education and training, for child care and health, and for other programs and facilities needed to promote women's advancement and to protect children. Social services suffer and the standard of living drops, increasing the burden of extra work for women as they try to provide for their families with ever decreasing resources.

Women suffer terribly in situations of armed conflict. Family life is disturbed. Rape is common. Economic life deteriorates, and prostitution is often resorted to as a means for women to feed their families. Many women are uprooted from their homes and become refugees. *MILITARISM* retards national development, the development of the human personality, and the development of women.

It was pointed out that when women have taken part in movements to defend their people from occupation or other forms of intervention or injustice they have taken new steps in the direc-

tion of their liberation. This has been the case in Palestine, where women throw stones at heavily armed Israeli soldiers and stand in the way of their children being captured. It is the case in El Salvador where women take part in the armed and political struggle, as did their sisters in Nicaragua and Vietnam. It has been the case in Uganda where women are part of the military forces that have brought new stability to the country after years of internal warfare.

Since the end of the second world war there have been more than 120 local armed conflicts which have caused more than 20 million deaths. The major military powers have had an interest in keeping these conflicts raging because of their own political goals and because they have profited from arms sales and the testing of new weapons systems during these conflicts. Today, more and more of the world's peoples and governments are coming to realize that the continuation of tensions and the escalation of conflicts could result in nuclear annihilation. Moreover, the world economic system has been severely distorted and brought to a profound crisis by weapons production and sales. It is time for a conversion and transformation from militarism to peace through the strengthening of international law and the United Nations as a world organization for the prevention of war. The international political atmosphere is ripe for these changes. People are desperate for these changes and are full of hope that they can be brought about. Let the women of the world be instrumental in changing the world. Let the Lutheran women be in the forefront of this worldwide movement for peace based on justice, love, cooperation and international understanding.

The group noted that there are many ways in which women can work for disarmament and peaceful settlement of regional conflicts, specifically:

- By studying and supporting disarmament initiatives on the table for discussion and negotiation at the United Nations and in bilateral and regional forums; to make this information widely known including through the media; to take action to generate pressure on governments to support conventional

and nuclear disarmament initiatives, including the cessation of nuclear testing, nuclear, chemical and conventional disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in space, and to encourage conversion from military to peacetime production.

- By strictly observing the agreement signed by the five Central American heads of state to disband the Contra forces by December 1989, and for peace through dialogue and negotiations between the *government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (FMLN)*. *The sending of delegations to the area and other exchanges* are to be encouraged.
- By affirming and supporting the convening of an International Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the UN.
- By encouraging the recognition of Palestine by all governments, and by pressuring Israel to keep open all schools and institutions of higher education in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
- By providing scholarships to Palestinian students in universities and community colleges. Exchange visits should be encouraged. Women's organizations should sponsor delegations of women to Palestine, especially from countries that can be involved in the solution of the Palestine question. They should circulate their reports widely.
- By seeking comprehensive sanctions against South Africa, to isolate the apartheid regime and to undertake actions in support of the peacemaking efforts underway in Namibia. Representatives of the liberation movements should be invited to speak to churches, and women's groups should invite women from the area to inform them on the situation.
- By disseminating information on the human rights situation in the Philippines, particularly the plight of women and children, and by undertaking action in support networks. Philippine women should be invited to speak about these issues in local and international church settings.

- By supporting UN efforts to resolve conflicts in Afghanistan, Cyprus, Iraq, Iran, and Western Sahara, by informing themselves and taking action in favor of negotiated settlements.
- By urging women to investigate systems of education, socialization, and media manipulation that foster an atmosphere of militarism. Social and economic factors such as military recruiting among unemployed youth should be studied, and campaigns against war toys undertaken.

The following points need urgent attention for the people's education on *MILITARISM*

- the causes and effects of *MILITARISM*, particularly on women and children;
- existing patterns of domination and subordination in theology, Scripture, church structures and personal/family/social life;
- human rights violations;
- disarmament;
- racism and the unemployment and the maltreatment of foreigners in their country; and,
- peacemaking strategies.

The following approaches should be considered:

- development of study materials and study groups;
- actions of support, solidarity and networking with women who are victims, including the mobilizing of public opinion in favor of transformation, work with the media, and putting pressure on governments;
- evaluation of church women's programs in terms of the inclusion or absence of studies on the implications of militarism and its effects on women and children and strategies for peacemaking; and,
- exchanges, visits, the sending of delegations, and the organizing of meetings, particularly between women whose countries are in conflict with each other.

SUMMARY

MILITARISM, as a way of dominating populations through force, has devastating effects on people's lives. It promotes suffering, violence, and death. Women have witnessed the disruption of their families, endured economic hardships and become refugees because of wars. *MILITARISM* keeps power concentrated in the hands of a few people, and guarantees their access to resources. Allocation of funds for military expenditure deprives large sectors of the population of the means necessary to living with dignity, such as food, health care and education. Women are often forced into prostitution as a way of survival. Rape and physical abuse become common events. *MILITARISM* spawns violations of human rights.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The LWF International Consultation for Women recommends:

- *That the LWF member churches and their women's organizations educate their members, women and men alike, on the causes and effects of militarism and challenge them to engage in peacemaking actions.*
- *That the LWF member churches share with one another their studies and actions on peace issues and provide the LWF with this information to be reported in WOMEN and LWI.*
- *That WICAS leadership training programs pay particular attention to these issues.*
- *That the LWF and its member churches:*
 - *Examine their work with refugees to assure that refugees find a place in their new communities and that the programs do not make refugees passive or dependent and to assure that the refugees are not depoliticized as a result of receiving material assistance;*
 - *affirm and support the need for the United Nations High*

Commissioner for Refugees to focus on the plight and rights of women refugees;

- *facilitate information about scholarships and access to scholarships and educational opportunities for refugees, particularly to women and children whose schools have been closed.*
- *That the LWF assist member churches to understand refugee issues more clearly and urge them to undertake the necessary political work in their countries in support of peaceful solutions to the conflicts which cause the dislocation of refugees.*

REPORT OF THE ISSUE GROUP ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

VIOLENCE against women is so interwoven with other forms of oppression that it is often easier to talk about it obliquely as being a result of poverty or militarism rather than to deal with it as a separate issue. The problem is not in naming *VIOLENCE* against women academically, but in claiming it as a pervasive force in societies around the world. We find that *VIOLENCE* against women is either denied, or relegated as something that happens only to the poor, or accepted as the so-called cultural norm.

We found that churches share in violence against women by failing to address this issue and in not properly equipping their members and leaders to provide support for those who suffer violence. A review of the Seventh LWF Assembly Proceedings reveals that a resolution was passed which encouraged the LWF and its member churches to engage in study and provide education about violence against women. However, it is fair to say that, except for a few isolated instances, little progress has been made. We believe that the resolution was a good one in principle, but that it did not go far enough. For that reason you will find that our report is very similar in content. Our discussion named many forms of *VIOLENCE* against women, but we chose to emphasize the following five forms: *sexual, domestic, psychological, racial and reproductive*.

Sexual Violence

All over the world there are examples of "sexploitation" and violations of women's bodies. These include rape, prostitution, pornography, sex tourism and sex used commercially to sell products.

Sadly, many of these crimes are committed, not by strangers who lurk in the night but by those who are trusted. We name relatives, youth leaders, teachers and even clergy. Though this form of *VIOLENCE* often involves physical *VIOLENCE* it also takes subtle forms of exploitation which are sexual in nature. In magazines, on billboards and on television we see women used as sex objects to sell products.

Domestic Violence

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE is perhaps the most insidious form of violence, for it is perpetrated by family members. We name husbands, fathers, grandfathers, uncles and yes, even mothers. Crimes against women and children such as wife beating, child abuse and incest are some examples of *DOMESTIC VIOLENCE*.

An important element of *DOMESTIC VIOLENCE* is the element of silence. This is a sin which we all perpetrate and perpetuate. The time has come for our churches to break the silence and begin to deal with this problem. We must overcome the naivety, embarrassment and guilt associated with this issue and begin to face up to the criticality of it. Too often churches refuse to address *VIOLENCE* against women because this can be controversial; however, in truth many churches simply do not know how to address the issue. Although some women are beginning to address *DOMESTIC VIOLENCE*, some are fearful of further abuse, filled with guilt feelings, afraid of the economic consequences or simply embarrassed. The ugly truth is that so many things go unexposed.

Psychological Violence

In describing *PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE*, we name the subtle forms of violence which permeate our structures and substructures. They include role patterns which support the patriarchy, use of repressive language, subtle discrimination and even theological teachings and church structures which have been used to legitimize the subordination of women in church and society.

Racial Violence

RACIAL VIOLENCE prevails all around the world. History, politics and structures have made this easy. We have come to believe that God has predestined that people of certain colors and/or ethnic backgrounds are inferior, and thus destined to hold a subordinate place on earth. Entire socio-political systems have been established based on this belief, such as apartheid in South Africa, the caste system in India and discrimination of aborigines all over the world. In support of this thinking, these systems have promoted elaborate stereotypes set up to "prove" that those being discriminated against are somehow unworthy, unintelligent and in need of care. The media have also been used to support this by providing visual confirmation of racial stereotypes. The acceptance of these stereotypes IS as violent against women as the physical brutality which takes place because of race.

Reproductive Abuse

In discussing *REPRODUCTIVE ABUSE* we recognize that we are at a point in the history of the world when issues of life and death are being debated. These issues strike at the heart of the sanctity of life and include: genetic engineering, forced abortions, in-vitro fertilization, sterilization, and surrogate motherhood.

Interwoven with these issues are the political forces which reduce the issue of life to issues of money, economics and power. For example, we name involuntary abortions and sterilizations, and export of dangerous contraceptives which are banned in some countries and sold to others in the name of containing the world population.

We recognize that some countries are beginning to deal with these issues. However, we see a real need to begin acknowledging these issues as pervasive. We must address them not only at the academic level, but also at the grass roots. When we allow the violation of women (either physically or psychologically) we allow violation of the body of Christ. If we believe that we are all made

in the image of God and we allow our sisters to be violated as we stand idly by, we allow God's image to be violated. We have learned that this issue is not a cultural issue or even a personal one. It is an issue of the Gospel and how seriously we take God's plan and promises for creation.

SUMMARY

Women and men are created in God's image and need to be respected. *VIOLENCE* against women is a worldwide issue. *DOMESTIC, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND RACIAL VIOLENCE* against women can be easily identified in many different cultures and countries. The use of women and children as lust objects is increasing and the issue of reproductive rights is polemic and needs to be addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The LWF International Consultation for Women recommends:

- *That LWF member churches and their women's organizations initiate programs and forums to educate clergy and lay church members about VIOLENCE against women including its facts and forms.*
- *That the LWF introduce courses to educate future pastors during their theological education about issues related to violence against women and to equip them to counsel women who have experienced VIOLENCE.*
- *That the LWF Department of Communication in cooperation with WICAS and member churches develop and make available media resources to educate people on VIOLENCE against women.*
- *That LWF member churches establish on-going systems for the protection and support of women, such as safe houses, counseling and help-lines.*

- *That the LWF Community Development Service and member churches give priority support to the establishment of protection systems for women and facilitate exchange programs among local women to form linkages and coalitions.*
- *That the LWF member churches raise their voice in proclamation and Christian education to address the burning and growing issue of sex tourism.*
- *That the appropriate departments of the LWF and member churches study and make known the economic, political, social and psychological causes of racial VIOLENCE and do everything in their power to combat it.*

CHILDREN

The discussion of poverty, militarism, the debt crisis and violence against women clearly focused on the profound effect of these issues on *CHILDREN*. The plight of children has reached critical proportions in both the North and the South. Deep concern was voiced for the millions of children in the world who are daily suffering from worsening social, political and economic conditions. The consultation expressed the desire to stand in solidarity with *CHILDREN* and with those working for justice for *CHILDREN*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The LWF International Consultation for Women recommends:

- *That the LWF Assembly delegates attending the consultation be requested to raise the issue related to justice for CHILDREN in the section to which they are assigned and/or raise the concern as an individual or with others committed to addressing this issue as appropriate.*
- *That the LWF member churches, women's organizations, WICAS and other LWF units be called upon to address this issue through programs of education and action and to work with both church and non-church organizations in combating the deplorable situation of millions of children, for example CHILDREN in the streets and those who are victims of drug abuse.*

REPORT OF THE ISSUE GROUP INTEGRITY OF CREATION

All of us human beings created in the image of God have been given the gift by God of a perfectly created world filled with life and harmony. This gift of creation represents God's love towards God's creatures. Along with this gift goes the responsibility to be caretakers of God's creation.

Today's world situation indicates that we as caretakers have failed in our responsibilities. The world has become captive in our hands and is in danger of being destroyed, thus creating an environmental crisis of grave proportions.

The identification of the many environmental issues in the countries represented by the participants in the group clearly indicated the broad scope of the crisis, the similarities and differences of the issue within the nations in the north, south, east and west, and the awareness that we are all at the same time exploiters and victims of our own actions.

As human beings with a consumer mentality, greed and self-centeredness, we strive for a comfortable, easy, profitable life at the expense of others and so become destructive to ourselves and our neighbors. The industrialized countries destroy the environment and natural resources all around the world in the name of progress. Some of the other countries are often forced to destroy their rich, natural resources out of the need to survive.

Briefly reviewing the biblical background of the issue, the group acknowledged that misuse of the earth and its resources must be recognized as sin. Further, we must undergo a conversion in our attitudes and actions as caretakers of creation. We must individually and cooperatively exercise responsible stewardship as participants in the promise that in Christ all things are made new.

In analyzing the present situation the following points were identified:

- Destruction of the environment is definitely continuing and frequently increasing.
- People and nations are interdependent ecologically, economically, biologically, etc.
- Humankind has the power and freedom to decide whether to continue on the path of destruction or strive for change.
- Creative solutions must be found and actions taken for the survival of the planet earth.

The group identified specific environmental problems. Among them were air, water and soil pollution, deforestation, overconsumption of energy, genetic manipulation, over-cultivation, nuclear waste and excessive use of chemicals. Some of the results of these problems are soil erosion, extinction of plant and animal species, decay of woodlands, health problems for humans and the manipulation of creation.

It is lamentable that there are so many obstacles to moving forward in respecting the integrity of creation; nevertheless, changes are taking place and need to be affirmed and supported. For the sake of present and future generations, for the health of the earth and to fulfill our stewardship responsibilities, we must continue to act responsibly.

SUMMARY

Human beings are called by God to be caretakers of the earth; however, responsible stewardship is not being exercised. The earth is endangered and its very survival is questioned. Reversal of the destruction taking place must be done by individuals, churches, secular organizations, business, industries and governments. The church must play a significant role in caring for the earth which we declare to be God's gift to us. We are called to have the freedom to choose to be partners with God in the renewing of the earth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The LWF International Consultation for Women recommends that the LWF member churches and women's organizations

- *Examine and adjust their own life style and actions with the future of creation in mind and call upon their members and church related institutions to do likewise.*
- *Be urged to develop and implement programs of education to inform and engage their members as active participants in addressing the issue of the integrity of creation.*
- *Be instrumental in challenging their members to join or initiate coalitions of persons advocating stewardship of the earth and work on this with governmental and non-governmental organizations. They should also cooperate ecumenically with the WCC including the WCC conciliar process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) and the WCC consultation in Seoul in Korea, March 1990 on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.*
- *Call upon their members to participate actively in Earth Day, April 22nd, 1990.*
- *Call, as feasible, upon their governments to take deliberate action to reverse the destruction of the environment and natural resources and to allocate funds for this purpose.*
- *It is further recommended that WICAS*

devote at least one issue of WOMEN to the subject of the INTEGRITY OF CREATION and work with others in addressing this issue.

REPORT OF THE ISSUE GROUP ON WOMEN AND CHURCH STRUCTURES

God, our Creator, created men and women equal in this world. Jesus' radical message of inclusivity of all women, men and children is not often reflected in the life of the church today. On the contrary, in some churches women are excluded from some ministries and from the administration of the church. The church needs to apply its teaching so that true partnership between men and women can exist.

Through generations women have been discriminated against in society, particularly in education and employment. The church, reflecting society, is not an exception. Women have been seen as secondary and subservient to men. Women have been made to believe and practice what men want of them. In a number of churches, women have not been encouraged to undertake theological study, they have not been fully included in decision-making bodies, or been encouraged to take a full part in all ministries of the church.

We women, who form the majority of the LWF membership and actively contribute to its finances and programs, wish to be included in all ministries including the ordained ministry.

Women are powerful and talented, but often are not given and do not take the opportunity of recognizing how valuable they are. Women and men need opportunities to help open our eyes to the possibilities that already exist. In order for this to happen, we need educational programs and preaching from the pulpit to redress the biased view which has intruded into church structures that men are superior to women.

Most church structures today do not allow a free flow of information, sharing and discussion. This centers power in the structurally powerful and thus further excludes possibilities for full and equal participation and leadership of both men and women. The

present non-communicative structures must be transformed to allow full participation of all in order to manifest fully the body of Christ.

SUMMARY

We affirm the Reformation principles of justification by grace through faith (Augsburg Confession, Article 4), *sola scriptura*, and the understanding of the priesthood of all believers. However, we as women do not see these principles fully reflected in our church structures or in the practices of our churches. This is manifested in a number of ways in which the church does not affirm the power, gifts, and strengths of women. The true equality of women and men in the family, in the church and society is not given sufficient importance in the practices and teachings of the church. Women are often referred to by their marital, rather than their professional status. Women are not allowed to participate fully in the ministries of the church, including ordination. Education, leadership, and training programs are not easily accessible to women, which is an obstacle to their full participation in international conferences. When women do participate in international gatherings, we are often not represented in appropriate numbers despite the 40% representation formula agreed upon at the Seventh LWF Assembly.

The majority of people in the member churches of the LWF are women. This represents an important source of power, one that is not always recognized by those who possess it. Women must learn to recognize and claim the power that is ours.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The LWF International Consultation for Women recommends:

- *That all women and their organizations re-evaluate their concept of power and encourage each other to recognize their capacities and claim more effectively the power of people.*
- *That all member churches plan, promote, and implement*

family-life education in order to give confidence to all people to work towards equality and full participation of women, men, and children in the family and in church and society.

- *That the LWF, member churches and women's organizations refer to women according to their professional status where appropriate.*

- *That the LWF member churches, with the help of WICAS, create a program for training women in foreign languages, especially English, and in procedures and other skills needed to enable women to participate fully in international conferences. The candidates for such training should be selected in consultation with church women and their organizations.*

- *That LWF member churches*

Encourage the full participation of women in all ministries of the church by:

- *Ordaining those women who are theologically trained and seek ordination*
- *Taking steps to educate women for the ordained ministry*
- *Providing theological study programs for lay persons*
- *Taking action in their own structures to implement the 40% representation formula as agreed upon for assembly delegates and LWF structures at the Seventh Assembly.*

- *That the LWF reaffirm the representation formula of 40% women in all LWF structures and activities, and urge continual commitment to the principle of moving towards 50% representation of women.*

- *That the LWF Department of Studies in consultation with WICAS undertake between the Eighth and the Ninth Assembly a five year major research project on the sin of sexism and its effects in the life and mission of the church, and to include recommendations for actions against this evil in its report to the LWF and its member churches.*

- *That the LWF structures and representations should reflect communion irrespective of financial or numerical power.*

APPENDIX TO RECOMMENDATION NO. 8 ON CHURCH STRUCTURES

(The ICW spent quite a lot of time discussing the proposed future structure of the Lutheran World Federation. During the discussion, one participant from a donor nation brought to notice the argument that donor churches should be given more power in form of representation on the decision-making bodies of the LWF, because they give their money. This comment triggered a strong reaction from a participant from a receiver church. The ICW requested that this reaction should appear verbatim as an appendix to this section of the report.)

"The LWF structure should reflect communion irrespective of financial or numerical power. When a Christian gives to God's people through his or her member church or through the LWF it is not a way of buying the lion's share of seats in the administrative council. The Bible says that what the right hand gives, the left hand should not know. Claiming financial power threatens the smaller churches and makes them slaves in an indirect way.

From the receivers' point of view: We have lost our birth right and human dignity like Esau. We dance according to the music of the donor for fear that the donations might be withdrawn. We have become psychological slaves of the givers and can even agree to be dictated to even in our own houses and our churches. We are afraid to give our small and friendly gifts because we might be misunderstood as begging for bigger gifts. The attitude of those with financial power hurts us. It would be better to sell all the chapels and institutions built from their donations, give back the money to the donors and say 'Thank you for your effort. Take back your money. It is better to worship God under a tree and regain peace and human dignity' rather than become a slave to the donors. The donors must be sensitive to the reasons for their donation. They must respect the receivers

because poor people do not vote to be poor. The receivers may be dirty or different but they must be respected. We must have communion in Christ without buying it, because Jesus gave salvation to everyone freely."

WICAS STAFFING

In the light of the tasks and expectations identified by this consultation regarding the current concerns of women in our member churches, the International Consultation for Women recommends:

- *To adequately staff the Women's Office (WICAS) with at least one executive and one assistant executive;*
- *to ensure that all LWF units in Geneva increase their efforts to integrate the concerns of women in their work and programs;*
- *to urge the member churches to establish Women's Desks with full-time staff where they do not yet exist.*

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